Civil Rights History Project
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Interviewees: Joseph Howell, Embry Howell

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START OF RECORDING

Female 1: From the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

David Cline: Today is December 13, 2015. This is David Cline from the History Department at Virginia Tech, and also working with the Southern Oral History Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I am here for the Civil Rights History Project of the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, and the Southern Oral History Program.

And [I'm] very honored to be here today with Joseph and Embry Howell. And what I would ask you to do--. Oh, one note. I wanted to acknowledge a couple of other people in the room, before I have you introduce yourselves. So, we have John Bishop from Media Generation behind the camera. And also, helping us out today is Guha Shankar from the Library of Congress.

So now, what I would ask you to do--. And this is the only time I'm going to script you at all today--. Is to ask you to use a full sentence to introduce yourself, each of

you. "I am," or, "My name is--," and introduce yourself. And then what we're going to do is just have a conversation. We'll talk a bit about each of your childhoods, and what may have informed you, leading up to involvement later in the movement, and then we'll talk about your activities. So, whoever wants to go first.

Joseph Howell: Well, my name is Joe Howell.

Embry Howell: And I'm Embry Howell.

DC: And Embry, let me start with you, if you could tell us a little bit about where and when you were born, and I'll ask you some questions about your childhood.

EH: Okay. I was born in 1945 in Bethesda, Maryland, near here, at Suburban Hospital. The war had just ended, and my father was just leaving his assignment in the Navy. Actually, he had already gone back to where my family lived in Bristol, Virginia, at that time. And my mother stayed here to have the baby.

DC: Okay. And so, where were you raised, then?

EH: So, I was raised for five years in Bristol, and then my family moved to Davidson, North Carolina, where my father was treasurer of the college and ultimately president of the college. So, I grew up in a very idyllic setting, right on the college campus.

DC: And could you tell me a little bit about what your family was like, the values that you were raised with? Sort of, the benefit of hindsight, in looking back. You obviously got involved in the civil rights movement. Can you see values that were instilled with you, or things that you were perhaps reacting to in North Carolina, at that time?

EH: Yeah. Well, I'm from Southern stock. We both are. My parents were both born and raised in Georgia. My father in North Georgia, near Atlanta, and my mother in South Georgia, really the Deep South. But they both came from--what I would credit my values--from very highly educated people, for the South. In fact, both of my grandmothers went to college, which was very unusual for women at that time, as well as my grandfathers. And that level of education goes back into the nineteenth century as well.

So, my mother went to New York, and basically went to Communist meetings sometimes in the [19]30s, and was very connected to the radicalization in the [19]30s. Not my father. My father was a more traditional person, but they were very accepting. My father in his presidency was influential in integrating Davidson. So, the first black students who came were from Africa.

DC: How did that begin, at Davidson?

EH: That was--. I mean, it's hard to believe that that wasn't until--. Was that during the time you were there?

JH: Sixty-three.

EH: Sixty-three, the very first black students. And they started with African students, and then--. I don't know when the first African American students came to Davidson, but it's amazing to think that when I was a child, and I went to thoroughly segregated schools. But it was a little Southern town, and my friends lived across the tracks, and their parents worked in the mills in town, and I had very close friends there. So, I would cross the tracks to go play with friends. And my mother--. I wouldn't say it

was her idea, but she didn't discourage that. So, I'd say, from very early years, I learned that all people have value and should be treated with dignity.

And we were--. Most people were quite religious in that era; went to church. And so, it was a Presbyterian church. And it was not integrated. But you got the values of [5:00] love and acceptance, I think, from that as well.

DC: Did they have Race Relations Sunday, at that point, in the church?

EH: No. There was nothing like that. There was no real effort reaching across. But that started a little bit--. I'd say, just starting in the beginnings of the civil rights movement in the early [19]60s, but I can't recall anything like that happening much in Davidson. Joe might, because he was a student there, and he was a student radical there. But what was interesting was that we were in Southwest Georgia, which will come up later, and my grandmother--. My mother was raised just a few miles from where we lived. And so, there we were, back in Southwest Georgia, where she grew up. [Laughs] And she was quite accepting of us doing what we did.

DC: Well, I will definitely ask about her connection to you all.

EH: Yeah.

DC: Joe, if I could turn to you for a moment, and have you tell us a little bit about where you were born and raised, and--.

JH: See, I was born in 1942, in Nashville, Tennessee. And I grew up in a suburb of Nashville called Belle Meade, which was the, quote, "elite" neighborhood. My father was--. Ended up being a president of a bank, and his father was the president of a bank, and it was understood that I would probably be a banker. And I went to Montgomery Bell Academy, which was an elite prep school of all boys. And this was

part of the Nashville elite, a very heavy emphasis on some of the social aspects of social order.

And what affected my life early on was having polio in 1952. I was moderately paralyzed. I spent six months in Warm Springs. I missed two years of school. I had a homebound teacher, but I was not a part of the school those years, with growing up at the very important ages of ten and twelve. And that gave me a sensitivity for people who were suffering. I never felt sorry for myself, really, in that sense of being, of suffering. But I felt an empathy for people that I think I probably would not have felt otherwise. And if I had not had that experience, it's quite probable I never would have ended up getting involved in the Civil Rights Movement.

So, that was sort of the foundations. What I did not know growing up--.

DC: Do you remember making those kind of connections, even that young, or was it just something that you gravitated to--?

JH: I think I look back on it, it just sort of happened. I was always sort of a bleeding heart. It wasn't just civil rights, but I had a soft spot in my heart. We were--. I remember bringing turkeys to poor people in high school and feeling, "Ah, how can I--? How can--?" And then, "How can people live in such conditions, and in an area where there's such affluence?" So, I think that was a piece of it. And my parents were both very religious and very involved in the church. My mother especially. And I think there were religious values I think that were important as well. We were Episcopalians, and our church was near Vanderbilt, and it was a somewhat diverse congregation.

DC: And you went to Davidson.

JH: I went to Davidson.

DC: And that's where you met, I assume?

JH: Well, senior year. After I'd gotten involved in the civil rights movement, we--. And I'm going to get into that, probably, in a minute, but we--. My senior year, Embry at that point was a mere child. I'm looking back on it now, I can't believe we were so young. But it was at Randolph-Macon College. We had moved out of town, although I think briefly we had met once before. But that's when we started dating, there at the end of my senior year at Davidson.

DC: So, you dated the president's daughter?

JH: The president's daughter. [Laughter] And I was the controversial student on campus.

DC: So, tell us about student activism at Davidson, in that period. And this is [19]62--?

JH: Well, yeah, I was going to get--. I meant to mention, in Nashville--. I did not know, in Nashville, what was going on at the time, in 1962 and 1963, and even earlier than that. But that's where a lot of the early civil rights movement was taking place. And the planning of it all. The early sit-ins were planned in Nashville. Nashville was supposed to be the first spot, but they were pre-empted by Greensboro A&T, North Carolina A&T, etc.

But Davidson was aware of that. My freshman year, my sophomore year, were other sit-ins. A few students participated, but it was very controversial. And then I became sort of a big man on campus my senior year. I was president of the YMCA, which for some bizarre reason, [10:00] it was an important institution then, at Davidson. And I was the president of ODK, which gave me a lot of social standing with their

leadership fraternity. And I was in a fraternity. In fact, I was about as conformist as you can find. [Laughs] I did all the things you're supposed to do. But the segregation piece was a no-brainer, even then, in terms of the injustice. I mean, even growing up, you were aware of, this just doesn't make any sense. I remember having a playmate who was named Frederick. He was my age, and we played together until seven or eight years old, and at a certain point, my mother said, "Well, you and Frederick aren't going to play together anymore." Black kid, obviously. He was the nephew of our housekeeper. And I just didn't understand. She said, "Someday, someday, you will understand."

And I went to--. I remember going to a YMCA camp with a lot of kids. They were white kids, from the other side of the tracks. They would be lower--quote-unquote, "lower-class," working-class white kids that were very much anti-black-folks, and which rubbed me, or at least my sensitivities, etc.

So, what you get today was that all this stuff is starting to happen. And we went to a conference in Bryn Mawr, called the Third Great American Revolution. And it was mainly East Coast colleges. It was put on by Haverford and Bryn Mawr. And I just happened to go there with a handful of other Davidson students. I was the only senior. And all of the leaders were there. I mean, CORE were represented, SNCC, SCLC, was there. And if they weren't--. If the head guys weren't there, their lieutenants were.

DC: This is what year again? Just to--.

JH: This was the spring of 1964. In those days--. This was sort of right in the middle of the Civil Rights Movement. In those days, they said--the message was clear--the audience, the participants were almost all white. And they were almost all Ivy League, prestigious schools. Davidson was the only Southern school, I think, that was

represented. And it says, "Don't sit on the sidelines. Get involved." I mean, you can't be neutral in this. So, we said, "Well, you know, we ought to do something." And also, I did have one other experience at Davidson--.

DC: They were getting ready for Freedom Summer, too, then.

JH: This was right before Freedom Summer.

DC: Yeah, right.

JH: That's right. Because Freedom Summer was 1964. And I had remembered the Freedom Riders had come through Davidson my sophomore year. And I sat in on a very small group of people--they were in the, I remember, the student union; there weren't many people--describing their experiences of cattle-prodders, and being spat upon by these outraged white people, and all this. And I just couldn't believe this was happening in our country.

But before we, it was about a five-hour, six-hour drive to Davidson, and before we actually arrived at Davidson, which was late in the evening, we had come up with a plan to--. [Laughs] We were going to do something. We had this little stand-up. And I was the logical figurehead. I'm going to say, I was not an activist, and I didn't see myself as a revolutionary. But it just seemed like the right thing to do. So, "What are we going to do?"

So, we said, "We are going to organize a march." This is a very--. This was the same time that the march--. It followed the March on Washington, which was in [19]63. This was the spring of [19]64. "We are going to have the March on Charlotte!" [Laughs] Somebody said, "Well, wait a minute. Charlotte is--. It's not Jackson, Mississippi, or Birmingham, Alabama. They actually have fairly progressive racial policies. At least

they thought they were. So, maybe it's the March in Charlotte." We went. [Laughs] But what we were going to do is collect signatures for people supporting the Civil Rights Bill, at that point in 1964, and then we were going to mail the signatures to President Johnson. And we were going to partner with all of the schools in the area that we could find, but predominantly black schools, Barber-Scotia and Johnson C. Smith, which was the, I believe, the host school, and several others. And I was the--. Ended up being the figurehead [laughs] in this thing, in this event. And it was quite controversial, as you can imagine. And the fact that I was doing it--. [Clock chimes]

DC: Got to wait, just--.

JH: Got to wait till we get the bird clock. [Laughter]

DC: I do like that clock. [Clock chirps]

EH: They don't always go off at the same time.

DC: Okay, it's all right.

JH: I mean, looking back on it, it seems about as innocuous as you can get. All you're doing is saying you're supporting the Civil Rights Bill. But it was, obviously, had a symbolic meaning that went beyond that. And Davidson was the sleepy school, safe place to send your child. So, I got--. I knew that I would get a telephone call. I would get some pressure, at some point. And sure enough, a [15:00] few days before the march was going to start, I got a call from the president of Davidson College, Grier Martin, who had a daughter named Embry Martin, whom I did not know, at the time. And he invited me into his house--. I mean, it was like eight o'clock at night, and his wife, Louise, greeted me at the door, and says, "Grier, he'll be with you in just a second."

We went in the study, and we sat down. He said, "Joe, I just have to tell you that there's a lot of pressure on me, from the Board of Trustees, and from the mayor of Charlotte, to ask you to just abandon this idea. Now, I have to also say that I can't force you to do anything. You can do what you want to do." He was very careful to point that out at the outset. But he said, "The racial relations in Charlotte have actually been pretty good, and the feeling is that it will create an image of the city that will do more harm than good, because it will distort the picture. And you've already made your point, so why don't you just abandon it, and move on. But you don't have to." [Laughs]

And he--. I could get a sort of a hint of a slight--not a wink, but I had the sense that he was actually supporting this. And it turns out, behind the scenes, he was doing a lot to make integration happen at Davidson, which happens [to have] already started with foreign students, and then, a few year later, two or three years later, the American students were at Davidson as well. American black students.

So, we did the march. It got a lot of coverage. And the wire services picked it up, and the headlines of the conservative newspaper in Nashville had "Banker's Son Leads Rights March." [Laughs] So, that got everybody's attention. Joseph T. Howell, III, which is me, the son of Joseph T. Howell, Jr., president of Nashville City banks, is involved and a leader of this march in Charlotte. So, that--. My parents were--. Their friends would, and they were part of the--. There was a Nashville elite cocktail party set. And they were--. People would come up to them, and they would say, "Well, Carol and Joe, it's not your fault. I mean, these things do happen. And just don't blame yourself for it." [Laughs] And my parents were actually very supportive. They never--. I never

got any feedback. And finally, my mother just came out and--. She said, "I'm tired of this happening," and said, "Look, we're very proud of what our son has done."

And I'd be going back to Nashville shortly after that. I was a bit of a pariah. My best friend's mother, when I went to see my best friend, to play our usual game of Frisbee, met me at the door, and said, "You are no longer welcome in this house. You are a discredit to your race, and to this community. I never want to see you again," and slammed the door in my face. It didn't hurt my relationship with my good friend, but it was a real--. That was a--. And I felt sorry for her, really. I mean, they were--. I never took that personally, at all. I felt that she was a product of her time, and culture, and was in a sort of a straitjacket, as were a lot of people, in those days. Because it was a controversial time.

So, just to sort of finish this up, in a sense, it could have been over. But we kept involved. One of--. One relationship that was established was with Al [Allard K.] Lowenstein. And Al was at UNC State, teaching history. I mean, he would send me stuff, and it would be on the back of a test. Or he would send me a special delivery envelope in a dorm. This mailman would be searching around the dorm for me to get a special delivery envelope with a test, and on the back of the test would be scribbled something like, "Give me a call. Al," or something like that. So, we got to know Al, became almost Al Lowenstein groupies. Of course, he was involved in the Dump Johnson movement, very close to the Kennedy family, and a real progressive, brilliant guy. A very interesting guy.

DC: So, did he just become aware of what you were doing at Davidson, or--?

JH: Yeah, he had just become aware of me, said, "Listen, you're one of the people I want to recruit." And we became friends with him and his wife Jenny [Jennifer Lyman], at the time. And when we moved to Washington--. He was actually in our house when our first child was born. He was staying in--. He was sleeping on our sofa bed. [Laughs] But that helped, in a way, when I got to Union, which I'm sure we'll talk about in a minute. The Lowenstein connection. Everybody seemed to know Al Lowenstein. In the Movement, as he called it. And we would all go to his apartment house and wait for him to show up two hours after he was supposed to, with fifty other people.

DC: Can you just--? For those watching this who don't know who Al Lowenstein is, could you tell us just a little bit about --?

JH: Well, he went to the University of North Carolina, and became a leader of the--. I think he was the president of the National Student Association at the time, [20:00] and was brilliant. And he went to Yale Law School, and was a movement guy, progressive, and Eleanor Roosevelt was one of his heroes, very close to her. And he was like a Pied Piper. He had taught at Stanford, and he had taught at Yale, I think, for a while. And everywhere the he taught, students gravitated to him, because he was so smart, and he was such a charismatic figure. And [he] eventually got elected to Congress before they Gerrymandered his district, and then he didn't get elected, but he ran again several times, and then was tragically, tragically killed; assassinated, really, by a former student, who was mentally ill. And the student who was mentally ill was the roommate of a good friend of ours at Union who became a pretty famous civil liberties lawyer. He

lives in Portland, as a matter of fact. In Portland, Oregon. So, all these sort of interconnections.

DC: These connections, yeah. So, when did you start thinking about going on to seminary?

JH: Well, I got a Rockefeller fellowship, as did many people, and which at the time was a fund set up by the Rockefeller Foundation, to send people to seminary who didn't have any idea what they wanted to do with their lives, and maybe some of them would end up in the church. And I chose Union, because it was in New York City, and it was a progressive institution. Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr had been there. It was probably the premier Protestant theological seminary in the world, in those days. So, I thought I'd really made it into the big leagues. [Laughs] And so, I went that one year--. And I liked it enough to stay on a second year, at which point, I got somewhat disillusioned, but then it was too late to change, so I took a year out of Union and did some--. Worked at something called MUST, Metropolitan Urban Service Training, Bill [Rev. Dr. George W. "Bill"] Webber had set up. I had a great year. And then, [I] finished up at Union. By that time, I was interested in other things. I was taking as many courses at Columbia Planning School, City Planning [Urban Planning] School. I had a job at the City Planning Department in New York, and then got into Chapel Hill [City and Regional] Planning School and went to Chapel Hill and got a planning degree. And my life career has been in developing affordable housing, and seniors' housing.

DC: And when did you--. So, we got the meeting of the families, right? With Embry's father. And when did you first start dating and then get married? Where does that fit into the chronology--?

EH: Well, actually, Joe doesn't remember me, but I remember him. [Laughter] Which is kind of interesting to me.

JH: I remember the basketball [games?]--.

EH: But you see, I was much younger, just kid around town. But we actually met--. My first memory was being out there playing basketball, and meeting you--.

JH: I remember that.

EH: You do? Okay. And then I remember going with my father to the sunrise service [at] Easter, and Joe was speaking, because he was like this fascinating character, who was doing these interesting things. You know, a much older man. And then, also, that you had gone to work in the Lower East Side, and came and spoke to the senior high fellowship.

JH: Right.

EH: Yeah? So yeah, I knew Joe. And I remember being, I think in my bathrobe, and seeing you arrive at the front door with some kind of petition for Daddy about something or other.

JH: [Inaudible.]

EH: [Laughs] So, no, I was very familiar with Joe. And then I went off to college, and in those days, there were the women's colleges and the men's colleges. And you would have fancy dance weekend, and the guys would come for their dates. So, I had another boyfriend, and Joe came along for the weekend. And so, we began to get to know each other that way, and fell in love. And then, he went off to Union, and we got married after my sophomore year in college. And I transferred to Barnard College.

DC: Oh, okay. So--.

EH: So, we lived right there on campus at Hastings Hall, and I went to Barnard and finished my degree there. And so, that's how it happened. Yeah. And then we both came down to Chapel Hill together, to go to grad school. He went to urban planning school, and I went to public health school. And so, we were in Chapel Hill, for a while, before we came up to DC.

DC: Wonderful. Well, so, let's stay at Union, just for a second, because I wanted to ask you about meeting Charlie [Charles] Sherrod, who would have been there while you were there, I assume. And how you ended up going to southwest Georgia--.

JH: Well, it was because of Charlie Sherrod. Like everybody, he recruited all of us. I can't remember--you probably remember, there must have been a dozen students close to him. And he was very charismatic, and very much involved in civil rights. He had been one of the founders of SNCC. And his area was southwest Georgia. And the people that he [25:00] viewed as like-minded people that might be interested in doing this, he would approach us all, and look us right in the eye and say, "I need your help. I need you down with me in Southwest Georgia." How could you say no? And we had no idea what was going on in Southwest Georgia, and I don't think he really did [laughs] either. He'd been away from it for a while. But I'm still not exactly sure what was the method in the madness, but nonetheless, he'd recruited us, and I remember we discussed if it was something they wanted to do. And people were still getting killed, in those days. It was still taking some risk. But I remember, we looked at each other and said, "Yeah, this is the right thing--"

EH: A big adventure together.

JH: "--thing to do."

EH: Yeah.

JH: And part of it was sort of, I guess, an adventure. So, we signed up, along with some of our good friends, like Ed Feaver and Joe Pfister.

DC: From Union?

JH: From Union, right.

DC: And went down for the Summer of 1966?

JH: [Nineteen] Sixty-six, right.

DC: And you sort of said this already; you didn't really know what to expect. But can you tell me about the trip down there, and then what--

JH: Well, that's right.

DC: --what you found when you got there?

JH: Well, there were two things that pre-dated the--. Actually, working in southwest Georgia on this trip. One was the conference we went to, where we were supposed to be trained. And this was in Wake Forest, the old Wake Forest campus. And it was sponsored by something called--. Oh, gosh, I can't remember. But it was a somewhat radical Christian Ecumenical something-or-other.

DC: The Ecumenical Institute [?]?

JH: Institute. Yeah.

EH: That's it.

JH: Ecumen--. [Laughs]

EH: Yup, yup.

JH: And I know it was awful. I mean, it was thought-control, brain-washing kind of stuff, and sort of rebelled at that point. So it didn't help us much, because it was

not just civil rights people, it was all these other people who were involved in doing other things over the summer, and they were supposed to radicalize all these young Christians and take over the world with Christianity--. [Laughs] The guy was a complete nutcase, I thought; all the people who were involved. But we did meet some civil rights workers at the time, and they--. I remember going out, and they gave us some advice, in terms of, you always back in, into a restaurant, or some place, so you can run to the car and get out before they [laughs] come at--. If they come after you, you can make a quick getaway.

DC: Run back to your car.

JH: That's right, and other things like that. So, we arrived in Southwest Georgia, after driving all night at the SNCC office, which was located in an area of "Al-binney" [Albany, Georgia], as it's pronounced, called Harlem. And which was, in some ways--

EH: That's right.

JH: --it was like a miniature of New York Harlem.

EH: That's right, it was a miniature Harlem. Mm-hmm.

JH: And my recollection is [of] being met by these civil rights guys, black guys, in white T-shirts and blue jeans. And as we got out of the car, the comment--. The first comment that I recall somebody making was, "Welcome to Al-binney," [they] said, "We are Black Panthers. You are Roosters," which is the--you remember the emblem, that's the mascot of the Southern Democratic party, white Democratic party, in Lowndes County, or some place. Alabama, or some place. "Panthers eat roosters. Go home, whitey, we don't need you!" [Laughs] So I said, "Oh, my goodness! Here we are--. Wait a minute. What's wrong with this picture? We're coming down here. We're

Southerners, and we're risking our lives, and this is the--. We are not met with open arms." And so, it was quite unsettling, although that quickly passed, although that was the sort of introduction that times are changing.

And what was going on there? The big story of 1966 in southwest Georgia, was the big fight between John Lewis and Stokely Carmichael. And all of this was going on behind the scenes. Charlie was right in the middle of it. But the one view, John Lewis view, is that integration is the way to go. You need the white people, and especially Southern white people. I mean, we were the only Southerners down there. The only married couple. You need these people. They will play a role--. Well, the Stokely Carmichael view was, "Yeah, they could play a role, and they've played a role in the past, but we have got to be responsible for our own fate. We've got to build up the leadership, and to have white people involved confuses things, at this point in history." So, it wasn't against us personally.

But we had no idea that this was going on. We didn't know that Charlie was struggling with all this. And so, that played out in part, in terms of where we got placed, and what we did, and it played out throughout the whole summer of this split between people who were really gung-ho, and really wanted to make a difference, and yet, people--. The ambivalence felt by many of the grassroots black civil rights workers that saw us as a threat, [30:00] and as people whose time has come and passed, in terms of where the movement was.

DC: Mm-hmm. And it was that summer that Stokely Carmichael and Willie Ricks gave that a name, right?

JH: That's right. It was almost to the date.

EH: You know, it's interesting, though. I don't remember those statements. They might not--. I was treated kind of with kid gloves. I was an unusual person, this white Southern female. Most of the people had never met anyone like me. And the guys were always extremely polite and respectful to me. I never was spoken to harshly. The entire summer. So, I don't--. If I was there, I don't recall it.

JH: That's right, but--.

EH: I'm sure it happened. But I think they talked to Joe that way. I think--.

DC: What about your, Embry, your Georgia roots, and in a sense, this--. I mean, you had never lived there, but coming back to a place that was a family home--?

EH: I had spent time in Georgia as a child. I think it was actually helpful. I think our Southern roots were probably helpful to both of us. Especially as we became embedded in the community, and in the black family, because really, we were raised in fairly close proximity to black people. And had a fair amount of contact with them. We liked the same kind of food, we spoke a lot the same way, and we understood each other well. And I think it allowed us to not necessarily [clears throat] with the civil rights workers, because they were often not from there. But with the local people. So, I never had any sense of estrangement in that way.

Of course, we couldn't relate to the white people in the community. So, if they saw us walking down the street--. At one time, remember, there was white woman who stopped to pick me up as I was walking down the road. And then she realized who I was, and she wouldn't. So, we never had contact with the white people.

JH: And we had a--. I had a serious infection when I was down there. And I couldn't see the black doctor. I had to go to a white doctor, because it was just unheard of that--. It was completely separate. But that one struck me as being kind of strange.

EH: And then, I remember when you wanted to get your hair cut. My hair, it didn't matter, because we had that long hair, in those days. But they had never cut anybody's hair like that [laughs].

JH: Yeah, that's right. It wasn't the best haircut I've ever had.

EH: [Laughs]

DC: So, you went into the barber shop?

JH: I did get a haircut.

EH: Went into the black barber shop. Because you didn't want to go into a--

JH: It would have been very tough for them--

EH: --white barber shop. [Laughs]

JH: --they were very reluctant to do it, but they did.

DC: So, tell me about living within the black community, then, and the family that you got to know, and maybe before that, how difficult it was for a family to be found, at first, for you all to live with?

JH: Well, that was the big issue, is, what are they going to do with us? In fact, we were a married couple, number one, and of course, there were all the people down there who were white, so some people would go into Cordele, some people in Baker County, some people Moultrie. They were all over, in Southwest Georgia. And Baker County was the worst. They had the worst reputation, and they had never had anybody--

any outsiders come in there, and they had this guy, Sherriff Johnson, or whatever his name was.

DC: The Gator.

JH: That's right. Just awful. You know?

DC: [Inaudible.]

JH: All these terrible things happened. So, that would be the last place they would send us, would be there. But they had an issue there, a problem there, in that the Head Start program had just gotten underway. And it had to be integrated. And there were no white people that would have anything to do with the Head Start program, so it had to have some kind of token radical integration. And they needed two or three people to do that. And it was Ashley, right? The other lady from New York was involved as well, but wasn't part of the--.

EH: And they had the one lady who came down from the Bank Street School, to direct it.

JH: That's what I'm thinking about.

EH: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

JH: So, they was going to be, Baker County--. This was Charlie's idea. Let them go to the Head Start thing. They'll integrate, or they'll keep their funding. Which was great, because we did have a purpose. And so, that was a relief to me, that we had something to do, working in Head Start. But where were we going to live? I mean, that was the other big issue. Who's going to take these people? So, we went to several mass meetings--quote-unquote "mass meetings," which would be maybe twelve people one time, and maybe thirty, forty, another time, and it would be two hours late, as we [35:00]

call Baker County time. You had to kind of get used to the cultural adjustment for all that. And then the call would be made, "Who would take this couple?" And people would be quiet and wouldn't say anything. [Laughs] Wouldn't know what to do. And then, finally, it came down, they had to make a decision, and it was a bigger meeting, and--.

DC: People were sitting there, meanwhile?

JH: That's right. We're sitting there, observing this. Sometimes we were asked to leave, but it was quite awkward. [Laughs] You know, we said, "Gee, we don't really want to--." Because people were actually pretty afraid to have a--. White people staying in their house would be a red flag for these, Sheriff Johnson, and these other people. After a week or so of this, of going--. And it was a good drive, of thirty, forty miles from Albany to Newton, Georgia. So we'd be going back and forth. There was a meeting where it was very tense, and you could just sort of feel the heat and the sweltering humidity. And one lady got up, and she said, "I know it's--." Something to the effect of, "I know it's dangerous, but somebody's got to take these folks, and I'll do it." And this was Divina Holt [?]. And [she] lived on a little sandy road, out in the middle of nowhere. And we stayed with the Holt family. It was Noah. Jack Holt, who was actually--. He was named Noah as well, as I recall. But it was Jack Holt was--. [He] was almost blind--. Was her husband, who was a small farmer there. They had gotten land free from a somewhat, quote, "enlightened" slave owner. But it was second-generation. They must have been second-generation, from his. And everybody on that little road had some acres of farmland. And so, we ended up staying with this family, and becoming a part of the family. And--.

EH: They were independent, because they were independent farmers. So they couldn't be thrown off their land.

JH: That's right.

DC: So they could take some risk.

EH: Yeah. Yeah.

JH: So you might want to talk a little bit about the Holt family, and--.

EH: Yeah.

JH: That would like--.

EH: The Holt family. We moved right in. They actually moved out of their bedroom, and we moved in. And in that house, there was us, the Holt parents, their two sons, who were sixteen and twelve, as I recall, that summer. Along about there. And those boys had been some of the first to integrate the white schools. Yeah. So, they were very brave people. And then, Ashley Wiltshire, who was another seminary student. So we all lived in the house together.

They cooked for us. Ms. Holt, every day, we'd wake up, and she was making biscuits. And they were delicious. She cooked the most delicious food for us all summer. They grew their own food. They'd slaughter a pig, you know, and we'd eat everything that came from the pig.

JH: Chase a chicken down and wring his neck, [Laughs] every morning.

EH: Yeah, she would chase a chicken and wring its neck, like that. And every Sunday, there'd be chicken and dumplings. So, we ate very well, and we loved the Holts, and we became very close to them. She treated us like their own children, really.

DC: And you've maintained contact with the Holts?

EH: Yes. Well, it's interesting how it happened. We did, and then we kind of trailed off, and we heard--. Because Ed Feaver, [and] our friends, they were down there, and so we heard that Mr. Holt died. And then, we were very careful to call them Mr. and Mrs. Holt. I mean, that's one of the things in the South is that, often, black older people were called by their first name by people of our generation, which we definitely avoided that, and called them "Mr." and "Mrs." And I never heard her say, "Don't do that." They--.

JH: [Inaudible.]

EH: She appreciated that, because in the black community, it's very formal. You know, and you do--. So, we heard he died. And he was quite a bit older than her. And then she lived on, but unfortunately, we didn't see her until she died. But when we went back down, we--. Or we had had a visit down there on our way to Florida, and we had tracked down the boys, as they were now grown men. And then we saw them again when we went for the reunion. So, yeah, we just send them a Christmas card, and yeah, back and forth that way. So it was a great experience. So we were living with them, and we were working in Head Start, and with these kids. And then we were attending the mass meetings and church services on Sunday. And did a little bit of voter registration toward the end. But basically, we had a light job. And we were not targets, in terms of going door to door. [40:00] So, we were, in a sense, lucky. And plus, it was purposeful. We didn't feel that we were wasting our time, because we had these kids we were helping out, and they needed the help. But it doesn't sound very radical, looking--. I mean, when you think about it. But just being there, physically. And I didn't think--. I never really

thought about the danger involved. But when we connected with the Holt--. I would say Holt men now, but Holt boys, at the time.

EH: Yeah, oh, they're retired, now. [Laughs]

JH: They told us the story of the summer preceding our summer. I guess it was [19]65, where there was a standoff around their house with the Ku Klux Klan, and their hoods and masks, with guns drawn. Pointed a shotgun, went out and surrounded their house. And the people in their house also had guns. And it could have been, I mean, it could have just been an incredible disaster. But they backed off, and nobody got killed. But they could have. And so, that was the climate that was going to--. There was violence, and there was hatred, and it was like a war. And we were the enemy, from the point of view of the white folks that lived there.

But we didn't see any of that first-hand. We were very--. In that form, we were sort of protected. This was--. And we really felt accepted and loved. One of the big events was the Fourth of July pig roast that they have every year, and relatives from all over come to the event, and family, extended family. It starts 4 or 5 o'clock in the afternoon, and they roast this pig all night. This is July 3rd, and then on July 4th there's a big party, and you eat all of this terrific food. And you hear all the stories that get told, and stories about the alligators, and the ghost of the swamp. It was almost--. It was a civil rights experience, but it was also a cultural, intercultural. It could have been like a Peace Corps type experience, in some ways. You were with people that you sort of understood, because you've seen them, but you didn't really--. It was a very different way of life from what we were brought up. I mean, there was no running water, no bathrooms, very modest. But warmth and love, and--.

EH: We changed them, and they changed us. Yeah.

DC: That's what I think is so interesting, the different kinds of movement that the movement can be. Right? And that you weren't marching in this particular case, but were getting to--. One-on-one, people getting to know each other, and each other's humanity. And that's very much in keeping with Sherrod's vision, in that area, of the Beloved Community.

JH: That's right. That's right. And the--.

EH: And another thing that was going on that summer that we were not--. Were just peripherally aware of and involved in, but that Shirley's father had been murdered, and the trial was going on that summer. So, we were able to go and observe the courtroom where this very prominent civil rights lawyer from Albany was involved in trying to bring this person to justice, but--.

JH: This was the second trial, I think. This was, I think--.

EH: Yeah, I can't remember the details.

JH: A civil suit. I can't remember exactly, but I knew he'd already been--

EH: Acquitted.

JH: --acquitted the first time, and this was a second trial.

EH: To try to get--.

JH: C.B. King was the lawyer.

DC: [He] was the lawyer, right.

EH: Yeah.

JH: And I mean, there was jury selection. So, they would ask the same persons, they'd ask these jury selection. They were all white jurors. And I guess it was

C.B. King, would say, "Do you hate all black people?" And they would say to him, "Absolutely, yes, I do." And then the white lawyer would say, "But an individual black person? Would you hate that person, necessarily hate that person?" "No, no. Not necessarily." I mean, it was--. [Laughs] So they got them--. All of them got selected. Nobody got thrown out. I mean, it was just--. But he was building the case for an appeal. But I don't think it ever happened. I don't think that--. Something happened, in terms of actually bringing this kind of justice into it, and it never occurred.

EH: What about going over to--. Not Jessup Island, but where'd we go?

JH: Well, was at Jekyll Island?

EH: Jekyll Island. Jekyll Island.

JH: That was one of the highlights.

EH: That was crazy.

JH: Where they had--. The interesting thing about it was that there was an old, I think, NAACP group--. Elite black group from Atlanta, that was having a conference. But it was the black elite. It was very different from the grassroots SNCC people. And there was this great class difference between SCLC, and certainly the black elite, the educators, and sort of thing, versus the grassroots SNCC work. But somehow, we were invited, or we invited ourselves to get in, and to attend this conference on civil rights on Jekyll Island. And we got on a school bus, [45:00] and left early in the morning, and most of this was happening in a motel, but of course there was no place for us to stay, so we--.

EH: Right on the beach.

JH: --had to sleep on the beach. [Laughs] I remember the insect repellent going out. I've never been so uncomfortable, bitten by mosquitoes. But we basically crashed this [laughs] this event. You could tell the people who were running it were just about--. Were completely shocked as to what--. As to the kind of people that showed up. These bleeding-heart white folks, and these grassroots black organizers.

EH: Well, also because it was a white hotel, you see?

JH: Yeah, I think it probably was.

EH: And generally, everything was segregated at that time. And I don't know, maybe they've made some concessions to the NAACP, for a small group, but then, busloads of these people arrived.

JH: That's right, it was--. It was a very awkward situation.

EH: And took over the establishment.

JH: Nothing got accomplished, but we had a great time, I remember. [Laughter] [Recording stops and restarts]

DC: Joe, I was actually just about to ask you about, you know, we had talked a little bit about when you first arrived, your welcome there to [laughs] Albany. But how did conversations play out during the rest of the summer, about Black Power, as things were shifting in the movement?

JH: Well, yeah. What was going on, we were isolated there in Newton, Georgia. It was just three white folks; it was Embry and me, and Ashley Wiltshire, doing, as I've said, the Head Start and the mass meetings. But we didn't see--. Occasionally the SNCC workers would show up to the mass meetings. And that bothered me, in a sense, because I felt they were pushing--. And again, a lot of this is completely

my naïveté. There were so many things I was clueless about. But this was a revolution. This was not a summer camp. But they were pushing people to move, and to endanger themselves, and to take positions that they didn't want, that the local folks didn't want to do. They were afraid to do it. But they would push, push, push. And I kept thinking I wanted to push back. No! You shouldn't make these folks risk their lives for the cause. It was a very important cause. That's why we were there. But I had real ambivalence about that, not realizing at the time that this was not a feel-good, [laughs] although the Head Start was a little bit that way, but so, I missed that part.

The other thing that I was really naïve about was the black church. And then what bothered me about the black church was all this guilt, and the fact that they talked about how bad everything--. I mean, looking about heaven and getting your just rewards. And all, and you should be able to understand that, but I just felt like these ministers were frauds. And some of them might have been, but this was what they did. And of course, they would pass the plate several times, and off they would go to--. An itinerant minister would go off to another church. It really bothered me, and it shouldn't have, because the black church was very important in civil rights movement, and it would not have happened without the black church.

But in terms of the fringes churches, they were not a part of any of that. And these ministers had nothing to do with the civil rights movement. I thought there was a lot of manipulation and taking advantage of all these poor working people. But I, looking back on it now, I realize it was my lack of--lack of understanding. [Laughter]

DC: Well, I don't know about that, Joe, because, as you say, there were a number of people from the black church that were incredibly important in the movement,

and yet, sometimes that brush then paints all the black church as somehow heroic in the movement, and yet--

JH: That's right.

DC: --there were many folks, especially in that area, in Southwest Georgia, who weren't involved, who wouldn't use their churches for meetings, and as you said, were more interested in maybe filling their pockets--.

JH: That's right, making a living.

DC: Yeah. Right.

JH: --holding people back. So I was a little bit disillusioned by that. And then a little bit disillusioned by the pushback to having white people there, and feeling insecure. But then again, you get over that, especially feeling the warmth and love of the whole family, and their relatives and friends. So the discussions would take place at these weekend retreats, at the Koinonia Farm, which goes way back into the [19]30s as a socialist--pacifist, really--organization.

And that's when you would have these discussions, both informal discussions, which basically went pretty well. I feel like with the informal discussions--. I felt well-liked by these guys, for the most part. And when they were not playing the role, it was fine. But when it was time to take a position, that's when this would all come out about, "We don't need you guys. Why don't you go back home? This is Black Power, this is not white power. White power is what we are trying to get rid of." Etc., etc. And then, how do you respond to that? And in some cases, [50:00] there was sort of acquiescence on the part of white people. "Yes, we are guilty." And we would almost surrender. And I didn't, I said, "Well, you know--." I never took much of a stand, but I can remember a

couple of things that I said that were--. I would finally make a statement, somebody said, "Well, this just proves how stupid these people are!" [Laughs] "They don't get it!"

But that was sort of a game that was going on on one level, a sort of intellectual level, but deep down inside, I think they really were glad to have us there, and we respected each other, and sort of liked each other, for that matter, as well. And they were under a lot of pressure, these guys. They were young men, for the most part. And none of them were local. They'd come in and out of the movement, and many of them had really no clue what they were going to do with their lives, and they were going. They were basically our age, a little bit older, and struggling, I think, with life decisions. Many of them had gotten scholarships to pretty good schools in the east, and they had feelings about going white schools. And some of them had gotten scholarships.

So everything was changing. Everything was in flux. And you didn't know where it was going to come back, so you sort of focused on what you can do, to occupy the day, and working in the Head Start program was what we did. And just didn't worry about that, after a while. You just let the water run off your back, and if people want to sort of mouth off about one thing or another, I said, "Fine, [laughs] just let 'em do it."

And toward the end, I really felt some resolution, that a lot of these issues had been resolved. I felt pretty good. The diary that I wrote that I had, which is in the book, the *Civil Rights Journey* book--. It's actually in the diary, that all of this soul-searching, the diary has all of this soul-searching in it of, "Why are we here? Why? We don't --. People don't want us here. We're risking our lives. What are doing? We're not making--." Plus it was hard, with these kids in Head Start. Many of these kids had very tough childhoods. They couldn't do some of those basic things you would expect a five-year-

old to be able to do, and so we were--. A lot of discipline issues. So all of that stuff was going on. And then the weather was hot, and there was no air conditioning [laughs] anywhere. But it was an extraordinary experience, though. And it, I think, changed everybody on both sides. And I'll tell you, the other side of it here. We were changed by the whole family, and by the people that we got to know in profound ways, and respected, and I love these individuals as well as others we didn't know as well, and primarily on that one little street. And it felt like family, but we didn't know, really, what kind of impact we were making. And you never really know what kind of impact you're making. You just do it because it's the right thing to do.

So we reconnect with the boys, who are now in their fifties and sixties, at the event, reunion, which you were at. And we went to visit--. We met both of them. Nathaniel had remarried and had a good government job with the Albany--. State government in Albany. "Al-binney." And we were trying to track down Jackie, and we couldn't do it, because he had gone back to his real name, Noah. So, we had no idea what had happened to him, but finally, we found out that we didn't have his name right. And so, he had now retired and moved back to Albany, and lived in a very attractive house in a subdivision; a very attractive subdivision. Middle class, definitely solid middle class, and he had married and met his wife.

He was one of the first kids to go to the white school, integrated school, and then had gone to a traditional African American college in Texas. A church school. I think it was called Trinity, I guess a Methodist affiliation. Met his wife, his then-wife. I mean, his wife, the woman who became his wife. They ended up going to California. And she got--. His wife got an MBA from Stanford. And he got a master's in finance from

Stanford. She ended up being the head of Blue Cross Blue Shield Bay Area, and he ended up being the COO, Chief Operating Officer and president of the largest railroad in California.

DC: Which one was that?

JH: I mean, what an incredible success story. I mean, to think that his parents were basically--. Jack was completely illiterate. And Divina was close. And the fact that they were able to make that jump in that generation, basically says it all about what the Civil Rights Movement accomplished, and while it didn't [55:00]--. A rising tide doesn't lift all ships at the same speed, their lives would be profoundly different, had not the Civil Rights Movement occurred. I mean, profoundly different. And as we were leaving their house, after all the good-byes, we'd had the lemonade and some cookies. And they said, "But, Joe, I just have to tell you one thing." And I said, "What is that?" And he turned to me, "If it hadn't been for you--," he looked at me, but I know he meant all of us, "If it hadn't been for you, I never would have done what I did. You gave me faith in myself, and you gave me faith that white people were not all bad, and I attribute to you the fact that my life has been the success that it's been." I was just overcome. Speechless. Everybody else was, too. [Laughs] Ashley's wife, Susan, "Well, that was some accolade, [laughs] Joe." And I said, "Who--."

You never know. And I think the lesson here is--. And this is a universal human sort of lesson, that you never know what kind of influence you have on somebody else. And you think of your own life, of people that have influenced you in profound ways, that you've never able to express. Teachers, perhaps, or others, what kind of influence they've had on your life. That this is the way the world is, that maybe you can pass it on

to somebody else, but this was a rare instance where you actually got some feedback that you'd made a difference, and it justified all the pain--quote, "pain and suffering" that--little letters, because it was not great pain and great suffering, by any means, but certainly issues that we were dealing with. All that was justified many times over just for that one story, just, I was just completely--. [Laughs] Completely overwhelmed when I heard that. I still am. Because he and his wife had been so successful. They both won, in different, years, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Award for Accomplishment, in the whole Bay Area. We're not talking about--. Which is a huge honor. So, there you go. What a--. Talk about a success story, which I played a small role in, but it turned out to be a bigger role than I would have ever imagined. So you just--.

DC: And this is another argument for the power of being present, right? Of being--?

JH: That's right. That's exactly right. There are certain times just being there is what counts. You don't have to do anything, it's just being there that makes a difference, in profound ways that we don't fully understand.

DC: Mm-hmm. It's interesting, too, because you were--. We talked a little bit about you coming down to Southwest Georgia, and meeting Sherrod at Union Seminary. But that was all part of a little-known civil rights project called the Student Interracial Ministry, right?

JH: Right.

DC: And the Student Interracial Ministry was about, initially, sending black seminarians to work in white churches, and vice versa. And then it got more radical and more direct action-focused, over the years. And I've read, you know, in some of the

journals, there's this complaint, at a certain point, maybe around [19]65 or [19]66, when you're there, you know, "Why aren't we out in the streets?"

JH: That's right.

DC: "We're not where the action is."

JH: That's right, that's right.

DC: Right? And yet, what you're talking about isn't the action, as we think of it, but it's something else that, as I hear you saying, is just, could be vitally important.

JH: Well, that's right. I looked at us sort of as foot soldiers. And I never looked at myself as being an activist. I never looked at myself as being a radical, or anything like that, or even a leader in any cause, particularly. I mean, a bleeding heart, yes. But we were just really foot soldiers. But that's what counts. That's when it--. When you get people like me and Embry involved, that's when you've tipped the balance, you know? [Laughs] When you're getting the average person on board is when you're successful, I think, in terms of the movement. And it was a brief period in time, because just think, by [19]68, that's when everybody was getting killed. Kennedy was killed, King was killed. Bobby was killed. and the Black Panther movement then took over SNCC, basically. SNCC I think folded in [19]68, or close to it, and it all became Black Panther stuff. And so, this was just a brief, just a three- or four-year window, where the cause was right. I mean, it was still non-violent, and non-violence was a big thing.

I remember, at one point, when we were in Southwest Georgia, some guy reaches in--. A black guy reaches in his pocket--. [As] a matter of fact, this was in that conference in Jekyll Island--. Pulls out this revolver, fully loaded, and said, "This is

where the movement is headed." I said, "Oh, my God. [Laughs] I'm not interested in that!" [He] said, "Well, this is where we're going." [He] says, "They've been violent to us. We're going to be violent back to them."

So this was on the cusp of that change. This was before the big riots. I think [1:00:00] Detroit, as I recall, was [19]67, that's when the first big one--. And then it was, Southwest LA was about that time. Newark was about that time. And then the King--. in [19]68 when the Washington riots, and all that sort of stuff. The whole--. Everything changed. It was a whole different world. But this was when it was still purity in motives. There was black and white together, at that point. You really feel like you did make a little bit of a difference. You were doing the right thing. It was a no-brainer decision. I mean, I described this to our children, who are both--. Have the same--. The right values, we think. And our daughter is a schoolteacher, and our son works for a financial institution, but does what we call frontier market stuff in Africa primarily, in terms of getting investments and stuff there. But they will say, "Well, dad, you know, it was kind of easy in your day. The issues were pretty clear-cut." But now there are economic issues, and there are subtle issues, and it's much more complicated, in terms of how you solve these issues, which is certainly the case for us. In this brief moment in time, it was innocence. It was purity. It was idealism.

But it only lasted for a few years before it all began to change with the Black Power movement, and the Black Panther movement, and with the Vietnam War. And the peace movement then sort of kidnapped the civil rights movement in the late [19]60s, early [19]70s. And it had its own life. But all the people that we knew that were involved in civil rights were involved in the peace movement, and they were--. I

remember Ed Feaver was--. He burned his draft card. Of course, we were all burning our draft cards, at Union. Everybody had this guilt trip. Here we are at Union. We'd get this deferment, because we're in graduate school. Where the blue-collar people who have to fight this terrible war, and we're sitting on the sidelines. It's not right. We're going to burn our draft card. And I said, "Oh, God, we have to--. [Laughs] Do we have to burn our draft cards?" "Yeah, we've got to burn our draft cards. It's not fair to get a student deferment." So I said, "I guess you're right."

So I remember coming in and announcing to Embry, "I've heard all the issues. I'm going to burn my draft card." She says, "Well, why are you going to burn your draft card?" I said, "Because it's not right to have a student deferment for graduate school when everybody else has to go to war, and it's just immoral to do that." And she said, "Well, wait a minute, you don't have a student deferment. You've got a 4-F, because you had polio." [Laughter] I said, "Oh! Thank heavens!"

DC: Burn it! [Laughs]

JH: "I'm not going to burn it! I'm not going to burn that 4-F. I don't have a graduate deferment." [Laughter] But I mean, we would go down there with them and others. They would be down there, spending every weekend at the Draft Board down there in Lower Manhattan, and it took a lot of energy out of things.

But that moment in time with the Civil Rights Movement was just a great time to be alive. A great time to be young. And you could see the changes coming, and the changes were--. You know, the right changes. And just, what a blessing, just to have the opportunity to be a part of that. It was just, I think, an extraordinary luck of timing, and being sort of right time, right place.

DC: Can you tell us a little bit about what you carried forward from that, as far as going to graduate school then, and the book that you worked on that came out of that, and then your later career?

JH: Well, at Union, there's a lot of angst. People like me and others. At that point, it was a depository of sort of smart people that didn't buy into sort of mainstream culture that had no clue as to what they were going to do. They didn't want to be lawyers. They didn't want to be businesspeople. And I went there on a fellowship, as did a whole bunch of people at Union. I think like forty of us, almost every Rockefeller Fellowship person went there. But we were all lost souls. And when all is said and done, "What are you going to do with your life?"

And the idea [is], you were supposed to be ordained. I was what was called a postulant in the Episcopal Church. I was going to be an ordained Episcopal priest. And I was in line for all that. I had a fiery, conservative, feisty bishop, [laughs] whom I respected, and he respected me, but what I was doing was just over the top. [Laughs] And we had a final resolution of it and he said--. I was taking a year out of school to do work in New York in secular jobs, or something like that. And he said, "Well, Joe, you know, you can do that. But for every year you've gone to this Union Seminary of heretics, you're going to go to a High Church Episcopal seminary in Nashotah House, out in Wisconsin, someplace." Well, that pretty much--. It was [1:05:00] my way out. [Laughs] I said, "Well, I'm not going to do that."

DC: So then that was going to be the penance you would have to pay?

JH: That's right. A year for every year. I mean, he would have let me get off, I'm sure, for less. But it was like an albatross that was being lifted--. A burden lifted

from my shoulders, in terms of what I was going to --. But I still had to come up with something to do, right? And so, city planning just sort of happened, because they had the internship in Lower Manhattan for the City Planning Department, and I was working in Bushwick in housing issues grassroots, and it was really interesting. And so, I applied to go to planning school. But then you come out of planning, and then you still--. You know, what are you going to do with that?

One thing I haven't talked about that I think is actually fairly significant is, in my last year in planning school, which was 1970, one of my professors got a grant to study lower income, working-class white people. And they picked out the census tract in the Mid-Atlantic with the lowest income that was 100 percent white--. Almost 100 percent white. And they were looking for a participant-observer to keep the research honest. It was a National Institute of Mental Health grant. And I was selected to do that job. So Embry and I lived there in 1970 in Mount Rainier, Maryland. And these were white working-class families that we got to know. It was very similar to the Southwest Georgia project, in many respects.

And I ended up writing a book about that experience, and it was published by Doubleday in 1973, and it's still in print. It's been in continuous print, and has sold several hundred-thousand copies, and it's still used in colleges.

DC: And the name--?

JH: It's called *Hard Living on Clay Street*. And that was really--. I mean, in terms of what my contribut--. And that was a very similar experience, in terms of what I would call acceptance of people where they are. Non-judgmental acceptance. In this case, [it was] white working-class families that were struggling with all these issues of

health, and alcoholism, and family relationships. And I basically just wrote up a story of the lives of two primary families, the Shacklefords and the Mosbys [?]. So, I had that experience right after the planning graduate school.

DC: Where were the white families, where were they from, primarily?

JH: Primarily Appalachia. It was West Virginia, Southern Maryland, which is, you know, not the eastern shore part, but down in St. Mary's County, Calvert County. And we've maintained relationships sort of now, because most of the people we knew are dead. They all die young. I mean, I remember this one guy, who I've got his photograph over there, [as] a matter of fact, that died at age sixty-four, and he had had diabetes, and a lot of health issues. And he said, "God, I never thought I'd live to be this old." [Laughs] Sixty-four. Very old. The matriarch, who lived next door to us, was sort of the grandmother of the block, and everybody admired and respected her, but she was a chronic alcoholic with sort of low-grade maintenance--. She developed cirrhosis, and died in her mid-forties. And that was old!

They would describe people there as to whether or not they still had their teeth! [They'd say], "Oh, George, you know, he's the one that still has his teeth." [Laughs] I said, "Oh, that was new." So I had the in. But similar to the civil rights experience, in terms of the intercultural experience, but coming out of it with profound respect and love for these people. And it just--.

DC: And similar issues, in some ways, that they were dealing with, in terms of entrenched poverty, and--? [Interruption]

JH: I think I can finish up. But I believe there were profound issues related to, primarily to health issues, and Bobby Jean, who was--. All of these were pseudonyms

that I used, but she was she was the--. I have a picture of her [inaudible.] She had various kinds --. It was not clear exactly what was wrong, but cancer was one of the issues. It was never even clear if she even had it or not. But she had something to go to the doctor, in and out of the doctor, and just getting to work--. Barry, her husband, was--. He was a painter, but he was drunk a good bit of the time, and we'd go on hunting trips. One of the highlights of the book was going on a hunting trip, and this coming-of-age with his thirteen-year-old, and it was the first time he had been on a hunting trip, deer-hunting trip, etc.

But they were so human, and the humanity comes out there. I mean, middle-class people tend to sort of put a lid on things and keep everything kind of low-key. All the humanity comes out. And it's true with the black families, too, and there's nothing that--. We are who we are. And there's nothing that you had to sort of sweep under the rug. And so, that had a profound experience. [1:10:00] But I still had to get work. I still had to--. So now, I'm still going to--. I have a real job. And the irony is that the first job that I got, just was the last job that I wanted. I wanted to work in model cities that was going on, with the HUD program. I wanted to continue to do this sort of reform type stuff where my heart was, but I couldn't get a job. They weren't available, and at least, I didn't get one. In fact, I got turned down on several jobs because I was a little weird.

I'd written this book, the *Clay Street* book, and some guy thought it was offensive that somebody from Chapel Hill trained in city planning would write a book about ordinary people, and without any big profound policy recommendations or something. So I got a job with a commercial real estate consulting company. Which I just bit my teeth at--. I bit my tongue. The guy that interviewed me said, "Joe, I'm interviewing you

for a job, an entry-level job. I'm thirty-one. And I'm executive vice president of this company. And you're thirty. Buddy, you've got a long way to go to catch up." [Laughs] Which I openly did. But I learned--. Oddly, I learned the tricks of the trade. I learned how to do market analysis and financial analysis and all this other stuff that I didn't get at planning school. [Break in audio]

What I was able to do is take those skills that I had learned on the job with this company and use those to focus on building affordable housing and seniors housing. And I was actually a developer of Section 8 HUD housing for a really good company called the National Housing Partnership, and did that for three years. So I really learned how to do the real estate development piece. But instead of building condominiums, and offices, it was all affordable housing, and mainly low-income seniors housing.

And then I built a little company up. I had about twenty-five employees over the twenty-year history of providing technical services to developers of affordable housing, seniors housing, and expanded out to market-rate seniors housing, which was actually where the money was in the business of what's called continuing care retirement communities, independent, skilled, assisted. And we became sort of a niche company that was one of a handful of companies that would do this sort of thing. And I just loved it. It was fun, it was entrepreneurial. I mean, I liked the business part of it. You know, we were not building nuclear weapons, or chemical weapons, or any of that sort of stuff. [Laughs] We were helping people.

So I feel like I was so blessed to have had that experience to do what I really loved, and to have the independence and the entrepreneurial aspect of it, I just loved that. And then I sold the company in 1998, and then became an independent advisor for about

ten years, or ten to twelve years. And did some teaching in Maryland, at George Washington. I was an adjunct professor. In the honors college at GW, and a lecturer in the School of Public Policy in Maryland. And I taught a course on affordable housing and urban development issues with honors students in GW. I just loved it. [I] did that for six or seven years. And then, I had to re-tool a course, and I just didn't have the energy to do that. And I had a sailboat [laughs] that I'd bought in the British Virgin Islands, where spring and fall sailing is the best. And part of a charter fleet.

And so I decided to quit the GW piece and then the consulting piece sort of wound down. So for the last several years, I do a lot of board work. I'm on four affordable housing boards, and one continuous care retirement community board. So I'm doing the same thing that I was doing before professionally, except instead of receiving checks, I'm writing them. What is wrong with this picture? [Laughs] Right? So--. But I love it. And then there are these diverse boards, racially diverse boards in Washington, which is more of a rarity than it should be. And so I just really enjoy that work now.

DC: I think this is one of the--. To me, one of the really interesting stories of the civil rights movement, and people who were involved in it, is, you know, the movement obviously--. The movement did not come with a pension plan. So you have to go out and make the living, and--.

JH: That's right!

DC: And yet, how do you do so in a way that you can live with?

JH: That's right.

DC: And do good work, and yet, have a life?

JH: Right. Oh, yeah. I could not have ever asked anything better. I mean, how lucky can you get, in a way. And Embry is the same way. She got a master's in public --. Well, actually, her master's was from the School of Public Health and Demographics--. Or not demographics. I've forgotten. Something like that. It was mainly statistics, anyway. And then, [she] got a PhD in public policy from GW, and has worked for the Urban Institute for the last ten or fifteen years, and then other similar [1:15:00] companies before that, doing studies related to healthcare and related to helping poor people. And so, we've both been lucky. And she's actually still--. She officially retired last year, but she now is a contract employee, and she's working a couple of days a week, but a little bit more flexibility. So that has given us some more time. And we just completed an around-the-world trip this summer, four months. No airplanes. So we had to cross two oceans, one on a cruise ship, and another on a container ship. [We] took a railroad train all the way across Siberia. I'm in the process of putting together a book. I had a blog, and she had a diary. I'm going to combine the diary and the blog and see if I can--. I don't think I will self-publish this one, but I'm going to at least try to see if I can--

DC: Wonderful.

JH: --see if I can store up some interest. I had a good number of followers for the blog. So that gives us the time to do travel. We're going to do a road trip next summer, all across the US, and stop and see friends. It will be about a two-month trip. So yeah, we've been very lucky.

DC: You're having fun.

JH: Yes.

DC: Yeah, yeah.

JH: We're very, very lucky.

DC: Can I--. And we talked about it a little bit, but if I could ask you to talk a little bit just again about what it was like--. I think it was 2009, going back to Southwest Georgia, what it was like seeing what had changed there, over those many years?

JH: Well, you know, the interesting thing is, Baker County--. I think Baker County had something like 3,500 people when we were there. Well, it's down to like 3,000 today. It's fewer people than now than had been by a somewhat significant percentage. And Newton, Georgia has disappeared, the capital, the county seat of Baker County, had got washed out in a flood. And there's nothing there, except this one building that they restored, the courthouse. That's it. It's really bizarre. It's like a ghost town. And then there's a little bit of--. There's a tiny little shopping center that they built up that's awful.

And the Holt's house has disappeared, and sort of fallen into disrepair, as have all the other houses on that street. I think. But also, some of the houses that are close by, are much nicer. The brick houses, and their new houses. And someone was telling us--. I've forgotten who it was that we were talking to there, that the white people now are leasing land from them, rather than where it used to be. So, it's just, it's a huge change, in a lot of respects. Although, not as much in terms of governance. I think they had one or two people on the county council there that were black, but it still is dominated by a white population.

So I'm sure there are issues. Schools are going to be an issue. But generally speaking, a vast improvement. Ichauway Plantation, which was then--. The Woodruff

family had that one, 40,000 acres. And the Mellon family had the Pinelands that they were--. Had the tenant farmers, and all that stuff. Well, Ichauway is now a non-profit that's an ecological thing. And it's like a park. Pinelands, the Mellon family, may still be there, but you know, it's probably somewhat different, but certainly there have been changes.

Albany, of course, now has black people running that city. Harlem is--. In my recollection, we went by there to look at that--. It [has] pretty much disappeared. The Holt, quote-unquote, "boys," because they were boys at the time, live in very nice houses. So all that's--. There have been steps forward. The Civil Rights Museum, which was interesting. The people we work with, some of them, they had not been in that museum because of a dispute. Did you know that?

DC: Hm.

JH: They were--. Something that--. Something had happened that they felt like they had gotten short shrift on it. So they just refused to go into that museum. But it was a great museum. And I don't know what the issues were, but [laughs] hopefully, they would have gotten over that. And because of a lot of ego was involved. So it was great, catching up with friends like Ed Feaver, who was a very close friend, and David Campbell and others, and Joe Pfister. He looked like Jeremiah, or something. He had this very white beard. Of course, he tragically died too young. But it was a wonderful experience, to sort of--.

And they've all done interesting things. And you've interviewed many of them, and have had interesting lives. So it was a great time in history for somebody to have this opportunity to get involved in something bigger than yourself that was going--. And

something that [1:20:00] you knew was the right direction, even though it got us dirty. I mean, every revolution is. But people weren't getting killed like they did in the Russian Revolution, or French Revolution, or the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and so on. So, we were, I think, very, very fortunate.

DC: Well, great. Anything that I didn't ask you today that I should have asked, or anything else that we should cover?

JH: Well, I think you've got a pretty full picture. I mean, I'm honored, and I know Embry is, too, that we're included in this. It's a great thing. I'm delighted that the Smithsonian is--. I mean, the Library of Congress. It was--.

DC: Both.

JH: Yeah, both are doing this. It's terrific. And then, there the great stories to be told. It was a great time in American History. I think the concern I've got now is that we could be moving in very, very dangerous with the undercurrent of hate and fear that people have, that Trump has tapped into. If that gets out of hand, we could find ourselves in a very, very different situation. And that's the scary part about the times we're in today.

And you think about my children. They are both set into doing great things, but our grandchildren, they've got to deal with this global warming stuff. I mean, when they get in their forties and fifties, they're going to see it. And even before then. So, we live in a very fragile planet, and the stakes are very, very high. So you cross your fingers and say your prayers. But at least we got something out of the Paris talks that looks like it's a good start. And I think the next election will also be very critical. So [we'll see] what happens.

EH: [Inaudible]

DC: So yeah, can I ask you just a little bit more to talk about the Sherrods then. You know, at that period. I guess you knew Shirley already? And--.

JH: We did not know Shirley at that time very well.

DC: Oh, you didn't know her? She was very young then. Right.

JH: But you know, we haven't kept up with the Sherrods very much. I mean, we saw them there, and then they had a book talk here. She did, after her book. And met them at Busboys and Poets for dinner. I think she was doing a book talk there. And so we reconnected then.

And of course, Charlie's got some health issues that he's dealing with now. He's slowed down, as we all have. I mean, Charlie's probably a couple of years older than I am, maybe five years. I mean, he's got to be late-seventies, I think. I gather, their kids have done pretty well. They've got good jobs, good solid jobs. But Charlie has this charisma, and he always will. And he's a great singer. I mean, you have to audition to work for Charlie. [Laughter]

DC: Do you remember when you were at Union, do you remember hearing him sing there? Because I've heard stories about--.

JH: I remember it, yeah.

DC: He would break into freedom song in the--.

JH: That's right. I mean, he had a great voice. And a great singer. It seemed like everybody did! Of course, the Freedom Singers were from Albany. There's where it all started. And that morphed into Sweet Honey in the Rock, which is up here in Washington, but they all started there.

And no, he was, I mean, some of the leaders there just were extraordinary people in the civil rights movement. They were smart. That's what I didn't realize. When I was writing the book, the *Civil Rights Journey*, it forced me to go back and do a little research. I realized how little that I actually knew what was going on. I mean, we just sort of did it. But I didn't know about all the stuff that had happened in Nashville. And the fact that all this stuff--. You know, Rosa Parks, and this. It was not spontaneous. She was interviewed--. You had interviews for the job, and training. [Laugher]

Everything was carefully thought out, in terms of what would have impact. Remember the Birmingham Children's March, or whatever it was, that got all the kids in the schools involved? And they knew they were going to fill up the jails, and then they knew that Bull Connor would go for the bait, and loose the Police dogs and the fire hydrants. Staged! It was not spontaneous. I didn't realize that. But a lot of smart people, strategizing, "When's the right time going to be?" And then bringing in others like us, foot soldiers, to help implement that. There was spontaneity, but it was a lot of careful planning, and that goes along with any quote-unquote "revolution." This really was a revolution.

DC: So, did you know that at the time? Or was that with hindsight that--

JH: No!

DC: --that Sherrod was very--. Had recruited you for a purpose?

JH: Well, I knew we were being recruited for a purpose, but it wasn't like exploiting us, or anything. I mean, he was still--. But he was of the John Lewis mentality, in terms of having white people there. I mean, COFO's summer, which we were--. I was recruited for COFO's summer, and I was glad I didn't do that one. I mean,

that was--. You know, when the [1:25:00] three young people were killed, the young men were killed at the very beginning of that summer--. And Al Lowenstein had recruited me for that, but I actually had a summer job. I had an excuse not to do that. And that was [19]64, so that was two years before that.

But I frankly think that Sherrod didn't have it all, by any means. I mean, he was working from his gut. He was working from his intuition. And he knew that the struggle was going on with Stokely Carmichael, and I'm not sure that he knew how exactly he was going to come out on it. But I thought he was probably winging it. A lot of it. He was winging it. But his instincts were right. And he got good people, and he was in a difficult situation, sort of balancing all this without anything getting out in the open. And so, this was all sort of--. Behind-the-scenes stuff was going on. And I was not aware of that until after the fact.

And I wasn't aware of a lot of stuff that had gone on.

DC: Right. And then he stayed for years and years, and saw great changes there.

JH: That's right.

DC: Yeah, yeah.

JH: So it's a great story.

DC: Yeah. Any other questions? Let's wrap it up, then. Anything else you wanted to--?

JH: I think I'm pretty much--.

DC: Great.

JH: [Laughs] It's not often that you get a chance to say whatever is on your mind, but I really appreciate it.

DC: Well, then it's just left to me to say thank you, because that was terrific, and we really appreciate your time, and Embry's time.

JH: Well, it was absolutely--. We're really honored.

F: This has been a presentation of the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

END OF INTERVIEW

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